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The
ESTABLISHMENT and FIRST YEAR'S ADMINISTRATION
of the
CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

by

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts

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1935

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The First Year of the Civilian Conservation Corps

IN his acceptance speech before the Democratic National Convention in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt referred to his plan for a civilian conservation corps in connection with the depression in agriculture, suggesting that land not needed for agricultural production be planted to timber crops. He said in part:

"...we know that a very hopeful and immediate means of release, both for the unemployed and for agriculture, will come from a wide plan for the converting of many millions of acres of marginal and unused lands into timberland through reforestation... In so doing, employment can be given to a million men."¹

He called attention to the threat of soil erosion and timber famine, and left the subject with a mention of the successful reforestation program in New York State.

The nation was listening with an interest greater than it usually takes in a campaign speech, since these were the proposals of the man who was almost certain to become president, the proposals on which national recovery was to depend. As Mr. Roosevelt put forth each plan, his hearers asked, "How will that help me?" or "How will that

help the nation?" It is in the light of these questions that the Civilian Conservation Corps, after its first year, is here discussed: how did it benefit the nation and the individual; how well has it worked?

From the time of the acceptance speech and all through the campaign, voters and politicians discussed the feasibility of the reforestation idea, as they did the other points in the rival programs. Because the employment-in-conservation idea was the most novel among Mr. Roosevelt's proposals, it offered a good target to both unbiased consideration and hostile attack. Critical hearers were quick to say that the plan's chance for success was questionable, but resolved to await its inception and judge by results. Republican adherents were quick to announce that its failure was inevitable, and set about within a day to prove it. One of the first bursts of disapproval came from the center of the defending camp, when Secretary of Agriculture Hyde ridiculed the plan as visionary and unworkable.² What he said on the subject suggested that he not only had a narrow and ignorant concept of conservation, but that he was purposely discussing only the least promising angle of the project. By arithmetic he proved that one million men (taking Roosevelt's figure) could plant all the seedling trees available in American nurseries, in the time of three hours. He estimated the cost of this three-hour

employment program at two billion dollars. These, said Secretary Hyde, were the full possibilities of the reforestation program. Republican heads nodded agreement, and the planting of trees rather than a policy of conservation and reforestation was scolded whenever Republican speakers opened their mouths. That the Democratic candidate had advocated relief of unemployment by putting a million men at tree-planting was referred to bitterly and sarcastically by nearly every opposition speaker who mentioned Roosevelt's promises and projects. He must have regretted ever mentioning tree-planting, and especially citing the definite figure of one million men. Up to the last Republican speech of the campaign this project was derided as a sample of the unworkable and nebulous planning of the presidential aspirant; Hoover referred to it in several major speeches, including his final address, when he stated that to offer such relief to the unemployed was a "cruel promise", and repeated that the cost would be prohibitive.⁵ He did not understand that costs are not prohibitive to the mind that originated the reforestation scheme.

After Roosevelt's inauguration the financial crisis of early March delayed action, and nothing was heard of the conservation plan until March 22. Then the administration sponsored a bill S598, "A Bill for the Relief of Unemployment through the performance of useful public work and for

other purposes".⁴ This bill authorized the President to "select" a Civilian Conservation Corps, to be enrolled for one year unless sooner discharged. Pay was limited to thirty dollars a month, leaving the exact amount to the discretion of the President, and an involuntary allotment of most of this salary was to be made to dependents. These men were to be employed on "maintenance, construction or carrying on of works of a public nature, for which sufficient funds are not available, such as reforestation on national and state lands, prevention of soil erosion, flood prevention and construction and maintenance or repair of roads and trails on the Public Domain, the National Parks, National Forests and other government reservations".⁵ Projects were not restricted to this list, but were to be similarly self-liquidating as much as possible. Provision was made for hiring skilled workers not available in CCC ranks, to be paid the "prevailing wage of the locality". The Government was authorized to acquire land by purchase, condemnation or otherwise. The President was to prescribe regulations and to do anything else "necessary to carry out and accomplish the purposes of this act." Funds were to be made available from the "unobligated moneys in the treasury, heretofore appropriated for public works".⁶

Publication of these details of the bill led to immediate and vehement protest from several agencies. It is worth while to note each of the provisions, since nearly all

were the subjects of criticism and alteration during the passage of the bill. Presumably written by the President himself, or at least outlined by him, it stated rather definitely what he proposed to do and how he intended to proceed. His ingenuousness brought curious results.

Speed was the watchword in handling administration bills in the early weeks of the special session, and S598, on the day after its introduction, was brought up for a hearing before the committees on Labor from both houses. Despite this haste, the hearing was something more than a formality. Chairman Connery of the House Committee was himself opposed to several provisions of the bill, and most of the witnesses had some objection to it as written, and were able to effect most of the changes they desired.

Several points are significant in the testimony of E. Y. Stuart, then chief of the United States Forest Service. Asked how the men were to be assembled, he said, "I think that work can be done more expeditiously and economically by the Army"⁷, explaining that the Forest Service lacked facilities for mass concentration, especially in the East. Regarding transportation of men from their homes to places of employment he said, "...the great bulk of them would not have to move beyond the area covered by the so-called Corps Area...There would be no cases where men would have to be taken from one Corps Area to another."⁸ This and other expressions of his views are of interest later,

in examining what actually took place.

Following the Chief Forester, Secretary of Labor Perkins took the stand. She stressed the relief nature of the proposal, and minimized the possibility that the one-dollar wage would be taken by private employers as a model set by the Government.⁹ This fear had been strongly expressed by Mr. Connery and others throughout the country.

The committees showed great interest in the provision for funds, and questioned some witnesses in detail on the matter. Lewis W. Douglas, then Director of the Budget, explained that the money was to come from the fund appropriated by the previous Congress for public works. All of the money had been allocated for government buildings in various places, but only a portion had been actually obligated or put under contract. Mr. Douglas explained that the idea was to divert for the present purpose all of the unobligated money, except on projects that could be begun within ninety days. The feeling of the Administration was that it was desirable to make immediate use of all money that had been appropriated, rather than to hold part of it in idleness awaiting detailed plans for buildings. The bill provided for the reappropriation of a like sum when it was needed, but Mr. Douglas made it plain that the Administration had no intention of following the allocations of the previous Congress. Instead, he explained, they desired to subject all remaining public works projects to a re-survey.

eliminating those judged unworthy and re-appropriating later for those that survived. This was equivalent to cancelling the projects of the late administration and substituting those of the new.

Representative Connery and President William Green of the American Federation of Labor led the attack on this plan of diverting funds, on the grounds that it meant hiring four men at one dollar a day rather than one skilled worker at four dollars, which precluded any rise in the individual's buying power. Mr. Green's position had a clear motive in the fact that the proposed army of dollar-a-day workers offered scant hope of benefit to union men; hiring a smaller number of men from the building trades at union wages was more to his liking. He was also convinced that the existence of this low-paid army would be a drag on the efforts of organized labor to obtain much in the way of wage increases in private employment. Like several other witnesses he foresaw the dollar wage coming to be regarded as the model established by the Government, and quickly emulated by private industry.

Further, Mr. Green voiced labor's traditional opposition to "regimentation of labor in peace-time", pointing out that the organizing of a working army, selected partly on the basis of a physical examination, went strongly against labor's insistence on voluntarism.¹⁰ This objection

went unanswered and still remains so; it can hardly be argued that enrollment was voluntary, since to accept any kind of a job in preference to starving is scarcely a voluntary action.

This point was further discussed when Chairman Connery called attention to the wording of the Administration bill, almost identical with that of the war-time Selective Service draft act, "The president...is hereby authorized to select from unemployed citizens...a Civilian Conservation Corps", empowering the President to "select" or draft whomever he pleased from among the unemployed. The committee agreed to re-word this provision to incorporate the voluntary interpretation it was known the President intended.

Had the President's intentions been as fully known on all points, considerable wrangling and speculating, at the hearing and among the public, would have been avoided. This discussion centered upon whether married men and heads of families were intended as the beneficiaries of the plan. General opinion was that they were. One irresponsible witness at the hearing wasted some sentimental eloquence (usually effective with Congressmen), when he said of the CCC, "It is going to take men away from their families, take the husband away from the wife, the father away from the children. I say you are putting the stamp of approval upon a system which is destroying the workers' homes

homes and families."¹¹ Likewise, had it been known that boys, rather than family men were to be the recipients, the dollar-a-day salary would have been less objected to.

Secretary Perkins, replying to a query on the subject, gave as her suggestion that "in most cases enrollment would not be offered heads of families, but since some married men would be able to go, "it would be foolish to limit this to unmarried men, as originally proposed. ¹² A word from the White House would have averted such fruitless conjecturing, and would have spared the Madam Secretary having her expert opinion ignored.

After two days of this discussion the committees reported back to their respective houses a bill still labeled S598 but with only the enacting clause identical with the original. It explained the necessity of the measure and the type of work to be done, gave the President authority to arrange with states and counties for work to be done on public but non-federal lands, provided for the application of the Compensation Act, and repeated the provision for funds.¹³

Comparison with the original bill shows this striking and interesting fact: the details to which most objection had been made were left out, and nothing had been added in their place. By the device of "permissive legislation" Congress side-stepped the controversial points and left the settlement of and responsibility for them with the

Administration. Throughout debate in both houses the fiction was maintained that by eliminating the specific provisions for one-year enrollment, limited salary and involuntary allotment to dependents, these features had been definitely ruled out. But all must have understood that the new bill gave the President authority to proceed exactly as he wished, giving him great latitude on the controversial points, and a free rein to make them even more objectionable should he so choose.

The behavior of Congress in this matter was typical of the times. The President alone seemed eager to take initiative and bear responsibility; Congress speedily did as he asked, taking care to put all details entirely up to the executive. It was the President's program; let him run it with no interference from the other branches, was the attitude of Congress.

But although Congress as a whole seemed relieved to turn this and other matters over to the the President, some individual members strenuously opposed the action and the principle behind it. Robinson of Indiana led the opposition in the Senate, but that body docilely passed the amended bill on March 28.¹⁴ Passage was less perfunctory in the House, as Chairman Connery presented the committee majority report without his signature and submitted a minority report favoring the adoption of an amendment to cover several points. The Connery Amendment called for a monthly

wage of eighty dollars for men with dependents and fifty dollars for single men, plus subsistence in both cases; enrollment for periods of sixty days; no army-type organization nor physical examinations; the work to be confined to reforestation; and public works previously planned to be continued.¹⁵

Connery was among the few who acknowledged that the committee bill was a blank check to the Administration, to be filled in with the original provisions. Though objecting to the whole measure, on the grounds of its robbing the public works fund, he saw the futility of obstructing its enactment and attempted only to alter specifically the undesirable provisions.

The diversion of funds from the previous congress' appropriation inspired protests from others. Trammel of Florida and other Southern members objected to the delay and possible abandonment of rivers-and-harbors projects included in the original allocation.¹⁶ Beedy of Massachusetts pointed out that it took funds from projects examined and approved by Congress and gave them to the President to be spent at his discretion on a new and untried plan. Objecting to the bestowal of "too great and unnecessary powers" upon the President, he likened the action of the American Congress to that of the German people in accepting Adolf Hitler, except that the latter had not yielded their

power so willingly. He argued that the employment of a quarter-million men out of some fifteen million unemployed was only a gesture. He pointed out that regardless of the amount spent on tools, equipment and transportation, the men still received only one dollar a day. He pictured the high cost of hospitalization and medical care, and the future burden of compensation and pensions to injured workers and dependents of deceased members. He stated that the jeopardized status of the building projects previously contemplated had checked all lines of industry connected with building. Lastly, he insisted that the expenditure of nearly \$150,000,000 on the project was poor progress toward a balanced budget.¹⁷ This excellent and comprehensive analysis of the whole plan got nowhere with Congress, but it did put Mr. Beedy in a position later to say "I told you so."

The practice of handing over the power of Congress to the executive and entrusting the administration with unprecedented independence was assailed by one or two members from the Republican side, but their remarks went unheeded as Congress continued to pass permissive legislation and to give extraordinary powers to the executive. Protests that Congress was shirking its responsibility and overloading the shoulders of the President with a burden that precluded capable and adequate supervision on his part,

were met with a reminder that the President was requesting permission to "go it alone" and preferred to follow his own plans in preference to any rules laid down by Congress. The message that had accompanied the administration bill supported this contention; it simply asked permission to proceed with a plan that left prescribing of regulations up to the President.¹⁸

Supporters of the minority report, which was largely based on objections of President Green of the American Federation of Labor as expressed at the hearing, were astounded by the presence in the majority report of a letter from Green recommending the bill for passage. The letter, dated three days after the hearing, professed Green's belief that the deletion of the objectionable provisions would deter Roosevelt from proceeding with his original plans, and that though Labor was far from satisfied, it considered the net benefits too valuable to be lost.¹⁹

As in the case of Congress, there is some question as to Green's actual position. His letter said in part:

"The regimentation of labor and the dollar-a-day compensation features are eliminated from the substitute bill...I assume that the President will not utilize the regimentation of labor feature and the dollar-a-day compensation provided in the original bill. I cannot believe that the President will apply a plan which the congressional committee refused to approve."²⁰

Still, it is doubtful if Green or anyone else expected the President to comply with the suggestions brought forth

at the hearing, in view of the fact that the committees declined to write these suggestions into the new bill, and since the House rejected the Connery Amendment. There is no escaping the conclusion that had Congress desired to apply the regulations suggested at the hearing, it would have adopted this amendment or similar explicit provisions. Connery had told them of being approached by representatives of labor unions who had voiced a fear that the President would ignore the testimony at the hearing.²¹ The fact probably is that Green realized that the bill would pass, that he could do no more for Labor than he had already done, that further resistance to a measure destined to pass would damage Green's prestige and that of the Federation, and that apparent agreement with the result of the hearing, as he professed to believe the result would be, was the only practical course. The assumption on the part of both Green and Congress, that the President would be influenced by the findings of the committees was later shown to have been unwarranted.

As it came up for passage the bill contained six paragraphs in place of the original eight and the committees' four. The President was authorized to "provide for the employment" of needy citizens "under such rules and regulations as he may prescribe" and to provide food, shelter, medical care, hospitalization, transportation and cash allowance. Other provisions were the same as in the

committee bill, except that the authority given the President was limited to two years duration. Also, one of the two successful amendments, from a score that were offered, was a guarantee against discrimination on account of race, color, creed or politics, but barring convicts.²²

Congress' assenting disposition toward the bill is illustrated in a final speech on the subject by Representative Jenkins of Ohio:

"The bill as it is now printed with the Senate amendments meets the approval of organized labor... It is my hope that the President in his regulations for the carrying into effect of this bill will see to it that the principles of free labor are not invaded, that this work will not be carried on under the supervision of the military."²³

Whatever Congress expected, they passed the bill on March 29.²⁴

On April 3 President Roosevelt announced the appointment of Robert Fechner as Director of Emergency Conservation Work, at a salary of \$12,000.²⁵ Fechner was vice-president of the International Association of Machinists and a lecturer on labor problems at Harvard and Dartmouth colleges.²⁶ It was announced that four cabinet departments were to participate. Selecting and recruiting the men was to be the work of the Department of Labor. Actual enrollment of men, caring for them prior to assignment to work camps, and providing transportation, clothing, food and medical care was to be the Army's share. The Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture, and the National Park

Service, under the Department of the Interior, were charged with the selection and planning of work projects on National Forest and National Park lands, and supervision of men while at work. Experience soon showed some dislocations in this line-up, and revisions were made accordingly, as will be seen later. The secretaries of the four departments concerned were instructed to appoint representatives, who, with Mr. Fechner as Director, made up the Emergency Conservation Work Advisory Council.²⁷

At the same time the President announced the regulations that were to govern the work. To the disappointment, and possibly to the surprise of Congress and the American Federation of Labor, these regulations were those of the original administration bill, except that six-month periods replaced one-year enlistments. Regimentation of laborers into an army, physical examination, dollar-a-day wage, involuntary allotment to dependents, diversion of money from building projects, and requirement of unmarried status, were all included. The fine faith of Mr. Green and Congress in the President's regard for Congressional committees was quite thoroughly deflated.

If speed had characterized the writing of the bill and its passage by Congress, no less speed was shown by the four departments when this council was set up and the word passed out to begin.

The first move lay with the Department of Labor, whose particular job it was to select and prepare for enlistment the men to be employed. Quotas were established for each state on the basis of population, ranging from 25,750 for New York to 250 for Nevada. Further division of the quota among localities was left to the state agency designated, usually the already-existing state unemployment relief commission.²⁸ To get the process under way with no loss of time, a quota of 25,000 men was distributed among seventeen large cities. This started a large group on the road to the work camps and brought immediate relief to the large centers supposedly suffering most from unemployment. Lacking facilities for actually selecting the men itself, the Department was obliged to delegate this function to relief agencies throughout the nation which were in close contact with the group from which the men were to be drawn. The Department could only set up general standards and requirements, requesting that the local agencies comply. For the guidance of these offices, three ECW bulletins were issued during the early stages of the mobilization.

The first, dated April 17, was written to be distributed among potential recruits. It briefly explained the purpose and plan of the CCC, and regulations which were to govern the work. The tone of this prospectus showed a desire to disarm suspicion among the boys and their families, a suspicion engendered by a proposal so new and

unprecedented, and one so closely linked with the Army. The booklet presented the offer of a chance to spend a pleasant and profitable summer in the woods, at the same time aiding in support of the family at home. It was made clear that although a recruit was expected to stay his full six-month enlistment, his best interests would be consulted in the event of his being urgently needed at home or receiving an offer of employment.

A portion of the booklet answered questions in regard to the work, one of which is interesting in view of what later transpired:

"Q. How far is the forest camp likely to be from a man's home?

"A. Forest camps of 200 men each will be located at various places in the forests and national parks where there is work to be done. A man may be sent to a forest camp in his own state or in a neighboring state. In general, the forest camp is likely to be in his general section of the country at least. Transportation costs money, and men will not be sent longer distances than are necessary."²⁹

Here we see a modification of the view expressed earlier by Chief Forester Stuart, and a hint of further changes in this policy. A final question summed up the proposal to the individual:

"Q. To sum it all up, what does a man get out of this offer?

"A. Six months of hard but healthy work in the forests or national parks, in an enterprise that is for the benefit of the people of this country. Six months of camp life, food, clothing, recreation, shelter and medical service, plus \$30 a month cash allowance for himself and his dependents."³⁰

The obvious care in all these statements to make the work attractive suggests a plea for patriotic sacrifice rather than an offer of relief. But solicitation was actually necessary to induce men to enroll. Despite all that had been said by congressmen by witnesses at committee hearings and by the President about the hordes of men who would eagerly avail themselves of "a chance to work in the forests", there was a period after enrollment began when the prospect of filling the quota of some large eastern sections was very dubious. Early in April, New York City's quota of 7500 had been exceeded in applications, but when called for actual enrollment, fewer than half that number appeared.³¹ Nor was the quota filled except after repeated and insistent urging from individual agents and the press. Several explanations may account for this delay. Enrollment began in New York City during the period of a Jewish holiday, after which many of this faith enlisted. Fear that the presence of the Army in the work meant future enlistment, probably for a war with Japan, kept others back. "Coddling parents" were blamed in some instances for influencing the boys to delay applying and to feel unwilling to leave home for some uncertain but distant destination. Some recruiting stations in New York City were showered with hand-bills urging the boys to resist enrollment unless offered union wages, a move backed by the Unemployed Council. The long period of waiting at eastern army posts by the

first quota had resulted in great restlessness among the boys and some friction with the regular soldiers. Reports of this condition doubtless aided in retarding the rate of enlistment until the contingents began to move to work camps and the prospect of a tedious wait at conditioning camps was removed.³³

Similar handbooks were prepared for the guidance of agencies entrusted with the selection of enrollees. An "eligible" is described as a male citizen between eighteen and twenty-six, physically fit, unemployed, and unmarried but with dependents to whom he is willing to allot a "substantial portion" of his thirty-dollar salary. In addition a certain number of older men, designated "experienced woodsmen", were to be enrolled in districts adjacent to work camps. The purpose was explained as providing experienced leaders and foremen to steady the inexperienced youngsters. This provision did much to save the day for the whole CCC activity, since the group of older, industrious and tractable men did much of the work for which the regular Corps has been given credit, and their presence in many camps enabled officers and supervisors to suppress insurrections and quell riots.

The restriction of enrollment to single men was rationalized on the ground that this group had generally been discriminated against when seeking employment and had been somewhat overlooked in previous relief measures.

Also, because the work demanded long absence from home, it was felt to be more suitable for men without wives and families. This restriction, as that of age, was waived in the case of the experienced woodsmen.

As has been explained, the Department of Labor was itself unable to directly attend to the selection of men for the Corps, and had to be content with setting up general rules as to the men to be recruited. The agencies to which the Department naturally turned were the relief agencies already organized and functioning in each community, ideally suited to contacting and judging the eligibility of prospective members. Also, enrollment was to be concentrated among the families receiving relief of some kind, which made the relief agencies further adapted to the work. Quoting from the booklet that had been put in their hands, under the title "The Type of Young Man that is Wanted" it is interesting to read:

"There is one other guide to selection that cannot be included in any formal eligibility requirement, but which is basic to the success of the whole undertaking. This peace-time 'Forest Expeditionary Force' should be made up of young men of character—men who are clean-cut, purposeful and ambitious—the finest young men that can be found in all the eligible group. Participation in this emergency conservation work is a privilege...The best men available are wanted."²⁴

The further recommendation is made that preference be given Boy Scouts and Scout leaders, "on the basis that such experience is a probable indication of personal

qualities and of a type of training in woodcraft that would.. give more than usual likelihood of success in Emergency Conservation Work."³⁵ The law provides that no "discrimination shall be made on account of race, color or creed, and no person under conviction for crime and serving sentence therefore shall be employed under the provisions of this act."³⁶ Thus Boy Scouts were to be preferred, negroes were to be admitted, and convicts to be barred.

The failure of the CCC to achieve all that had been promised for and expected of it is largely traceable to the whole-hearted disregard of the spirit of these regulations and suggestions. Instead of accepting men whose need was known to be great, and whose character promised probability of success in the work, these agencies, in many cases, particularly in metropolitan centers, availed themselves of this chance to get rid of trouble-makers and problem cases on their charity rolls. There was a tendency to select the best men and send the rest into the CCC. It is uncertain to what extent they favored Boy Scouts, but it is known that they showed a preference for ex-convicts, reformatory graduates and minor criminals. Despite the explicit bar against convicts, we read in an article by Mr. Fechner's personal representative in visiting the camps in the West, "I visited one camp in the Northwest where there were twenty paroled Sing-sing prisoners."³⁷ Their presence in the Corps meant that the selecting agency had given them

preference over twenty Boy Scouts or other eligible applicants. Many of the New York State boys passing through Fort Missoula during the summer boasted that they had police records and had served time in reformatories or in Sing-sing, and that the relief agencies had encouraged them to enroll in the CCC "to get us out of town".

A revolt among the men at Camp Dix and an attempt to create unrest among the soldiers there was charged to a group of Communists among the "young men of character" selected by the agencies. The tactics on this occasion was the badgering of regular soldiers on their receiving less than twenty dollars a month while the Corps boys were paid thirty under more favorable terms of enlistment. At the same place an officer reported that he was scarcely able to drive his car into the Camp because the roads were parked with fine cars belonging to relatives of some of the boys and even to the boys themselves. Investigation revealed that one group of recruits at Camp Dix was composed of "black sheep" sons of wealthy fathers who had arranged their enlistment in the hope that a summer in the woods under army conditions would "straighten them up".³⁹ A few had joined voluntarily to enjoy a free camping trip, showing real foresight into what the CCC was to be. The officer began an investigation of the recommending agencies, but the results were not published and it is probable that the inquiry was allowed to lapse, for reasons.

Out of 1791 boys received for enrollment at Fort Slocum, 257 dropped out after two days, explaining that they had become homesick or had come only for the ride and free meals,⁴⁰ a development reflecting small credit upon the organizations that had sent them.

The responsible and worthy were penalized, the lawless and disorderly were rewarded, and the CCC suffered a severe blow. In many cases where its success may be questioned, the presence in its ranks of such choice elements may be held responsible. The success of the whole idea was thus jeopardized at the very start by the short-sighted manner in which some important selecting agencies betrayed the trust of the Secretary of Labor and of the President.

A possible justification for this policy of the selecting agencies is the statement in the Labor Department's bulletin that not only the fitness of the applicant was to be considered, but also "the greatest possible good to the community".⁴¹ The removal of such elements as make up the bulk of the Corps comes under this heading.

The Administration itself gave practical endorsement to this view of the CCC, using it to rid Washington D.C. of its most troublesome group. Following the active hostilities during Mr. Hoover's attempt to disband them, a remnant of the "Bonus Expeditionary Force" remained in and around the capital, a potential source of embarrassment to the Administration. Early in May, when the bonus issue

came up before the special session of Congress, they threatened a repetition of the first outbreak. On their demand for shelter and subsistence, the President suddenly offered them exactly that: an opportunity to enlist in the CCC. The prompt and unqualified refusal that the Veteran spokesmen returned showed that it was something-for-nothing that they were seeking, and not a chance to earn a living. After maintaining a scornful attitude for a day or two, a few of them became discouraged at Congress' failure to vote them any further benefits, and decided to accept the CCC jobs if they were still open. They were, and by May 20 about one thousand had enlisted.⁴² Each state was given a quota in this new division, with selection in the hands of the Veterans' Administration, and the men going to camps separate from the regular Corps. Many requirements were waived and special efforts made for recruiting throughout the country, but by mid-June only 2600 had enrolled.⁴³ The mal-contented among the Veterans were still claiming a living on the strength of their previous work for the Government in 1917-1918.

The Administration made similar use of the CCC to provide work for Indians on reservations. Tribal lands on these reservations were reforested and improved, with crews recruited from the tribal rolls.⁴⁴ The Indian section also was separate from the regular Corps. It had no connection

with the Army in any way, previous contacts between these two groups having been not entirely harmonious.

The course of enrolling the men and conducting the camps was marred by but one incident that hinted at corruption. Many of the men on coming into the Corps had to be provided with such personal necessities as razor, comb, and tooth-brush. The first groups passing through conditioning camps were supplied from surplus Army stock, supplemented by purchases by various quartermasters' offices. Due to the immediate need of these articles there was no time to go through the usual procedure of advertising for bids and awarding a contract on the basis of low price. It was not until May that a formal contract for a standard toilet-kit was issued, the order going to BeVier and Company, a firm with which the Army had done business for some years. The circumstances of this award caused a revived interest in the CCC on the part of Congress and led that body to the consideration of some important matters.

When it was announced that the contract price of the kits was \$1.45, the general reaction was that the price was too high. Congress shared that view, and on May 26 Senator Carey of Wyoming introduced a resolution calling for an investigation of the negotiations preceding the purchase, and of any other reported irregularities in purchases of supplies for the CCC.⁴⁸ Later, the resolution

was amended to confine the investigation to the circumstances of the BeVier award, though several senators were disposed to look into rumors that corruption had developed in purchases of saws and of fencewire. On June 1 the Senate committee in charge of the inquiry recommended that no payment be made for the kits until a full investigation could be made.

In the ensuing hearing, all parties were cleared of any suspicion of guilt, but none gained any credit from the revelations. It developed that Mr. Louis McHenry Howe, first personal secretary of the President, had taken it upon himself to write to Director Fechner, giving him permission to buy the kits without examining any competitive articles. The Director naturally interpreted this as an order to buy the BeVier kits. After Mr. Howe and several assistant secretaries of War had passed the buck on the question, Mr. Fechner assumed full responsibility for having made the purchase, and Mr. Howe was relieved of having to prove that he had not been bribed by the BeVier people.⁴⁶

This incident demonstrated forcibly that, though Congress in delegating its powers to the executive had presumed that these powers would be exercised by the President himself, these functions were taken over by a great number of lesser executives. It showed that the all-important small details were being left to anyone who had time for

them, and were subject to the meddling of people like Mr. Howe. It showed that the President, unable even to supervise, had to still further delegate the power to an extent that responsibility was rendered uncertain and confused. Some Congressmen began to doubt the wisdom of giving up their powers in the expectation that they would be wisely exercised by one great man.^{47*}

The incident also served to focus the attention of Congress and of the Administration on the possibilities for evil that exist in the haphazard purchasing methods in use, where each minor division buys for itself. The suggestion of a single procurement agency to do the buying for all Federal departments was seriously considered, but neglected for more pressing legislation.⁴⁸

Through the first weeks of April till July the work of mobilisation went on. Every influence tended to increase the rate of enrollment as mid-summer approached. The first distrust and suspicion disappeared as the boys in camp wrote back to their friends, and as reports of the pleasant conditions there became general. More families were willing that their sons should enroll when it was seen that the Corps was not really being concentrated on the Pacific Coast in expectation of an early war with Japan. So the Army's recruiting offices handled over 8500 men a day during parts

*Some Congressmen had foreseen this; p.11

of this period, exceeding the rate of the corresponding period of Army and Navy mobilization in 1917.⁴⁹ By early July there were 250,000 men in work camps; later enrollments brought the total to well over 310,000, in 1450 camps.⁵⁰

When accepted by the recommending agency, a boy was sent to the nearest Army recruiting station, furnishing his own transportation or having it provided by the relief agency. From the recruiting office he went to a conditioning camp, usually at some large army post, where, during a stay of about two weeks, he followed a modified army routine, rising early and spending several hours in mass calisthenics, games, hikes, and some manual labor around camp. Several units were detained nearly a month due to delay in selecting and preparing work camps. During the wait restlessness developed at several points and led to outbreaks that foreshadowed later developments in the camps.⁵¹

Despite the testimony of Forester Stuart at the Congressional hearing, and regardless of the Labor Department's statement that the men would be put in camps as near as possible to their homes, thousands of recruits from the eastern seaboard were sent to the Pacific Northwest. Forgetting the bulletin's observation that "transportation costs money"⁵², trainloads were moved from the eastern coast to the Far West. Of Montana's thirty-two companies, twenty-seven were basically men from New York. Of the

latter state's quota of 26, 225, nearly 18,000 were sent west.⁵³ Mr. Fechner has stated that during its two summers the Corps has spent \$31,000,000 for transportation, not including \$14,000,000 for automobiles.⁵⁴ Of course the amount spent for railroad fares had to be taken from the fund available for work and relief; time spent on train-riding was lost for any productive activity. Also, administration was made more difficult and expensive by having so much of the Corps in the West. Such movement of the men can not be defended on the ground that the work to be done was in the West, since plenty of work is found for them in the East and South during the winter months. Also, had this been the case, the forestry experts at the Congressional hearing would have known about it, and would not have stated that the boys were to be kept near home.

This movement of the men was unpopular in most places and was in several ways a factor in limiting the success of the project. Typical of the attitude of many Americans on the subject is this excerpt from a New York farmer's letter:

"To us New York farmers it seems like a very absurd thing for the government to send two trainloads of tree-planters from New York City three thousand miles to Oregon and Washington, where there must be thousands of idle men waiting for just such jobs. There may be some very good reason for doing so, but it is a puzzle the solution of which is beyond us."⁵⁵

It may have been a puzzle to this fellow and millions more, but it appealed to the minds that conceived and

directed the CCC. So the trainloads of "selected young men of character" came yelling into the Northwest, strewing the right-of-way with car-window glass and with food and garments given them by a benevolent government.

After a work project was approved, a camp-site was selected as near as possible, and an advance cadre of about thirty men was sent to get it ready for occupation. Usually the men were from the company later to occupy the camp, with several experienced woodsmen and foremen to direct operations. This method enabled the main body to move in with less delay and confusion than would have been the case had they built their own quarters. However many commanders failed to capitalize on this advantage, and spent all summer improving and decorating the grounds. In some instances much work was necessary to insure a water supply and to maintain passable roads to the nearest highway, but frequently too large a force was kept at incidental work around camp. An official visitor to Pacific Coast camps reported that almost without exception the leaders had spent too long in "dolling up" the camps--though every project provided work for all available men without resorting to busy-work to keep twenty-five per cent of the camp out of idleness.⁵⁶

In addition to these non-producers, a headquarters

company was maintained in each district to handle matters of supply and personnel. Many of these members were specially recruited from high schools and colleges, under the experienced woodsmen quota. Under regular and reserve Army officers and Forest Service officials, they manned desks in the finance department, the quartermaster's corps, and the adjutant's office, and worked in the hospital and Forest Service offices. Though many thus never saw the woods, they did a large part in keeping the Corps running smoothly. The amount of work done by men not directly occupied with conservation activities was comparable to that accomplished in the forests.

The willingness of commanding officers to use so many men at chore work reflects the concept of the work held by the Army. As will be further developed below, the Army was primarily interested in keeping the men healthy and happy, a goal in which it was easy to lose sight of the Forest Service's purpose of accomplishing conservation.

Finding something for the boys to do was no problem to the Forest Service, with a long-time planning schedule to follow. Being given the work-crews after breakfast, the Forest Service foremen loaded the workers on trucks and set out for the scene of operations from one to twenty miles away. Sometimes lunch was taken and eaten picnic fashion, but in most cases the boys were carried back to the mess-hall at noon and returned to the job for a second shift.

The nominal standard of hours was forty per week, on a five day basis. In actual practice, time spent in traveling between camp and work site, and the noon meal period were figured into the eight hour working time. Different camps reported effective working time of from six and one-half to as little as three and one-half hours.⁵⁷ A Virginia resident wrote of the boys in a near-by camp, "I learned that most of them work possibly three hours a day, some not three hours a week, and some not at all."⁵⁸

Believing in the axiom "The Devil finds work for idle hands to do", the Army, in charge of the men at all times except when on the job, was forced to devise and employ methods of keeping the evil demon's influence at a minimum. Among the equipment for this purpose was \$700,000 worth of libraries and athletic equipment, including \$60,000 in radios.⁵⁹ Intra-camp baseball competition was organized, and all-star teams played those of other camps and town teams around the country. Tournaments were staged to crown boxing champions, who met the talent from other camps and towns. In cases where the boys were unable to organize and participate in some form of recreation by their own effort, the officers in charge applied themselves seriously to correcting the condition. A press dispatch from Mount Rainier National Park, referring to the Army officers in the camp, said "A big part of the work of these officers is

to teach the New York boys, fresh from the tenements, how to play."⁶⁰

A news item from Cheyenne begins "The story of how CCC workers at the Pole Mountain Camp quit an exciting baseball game Wednesday to extinguish a forest fire, was told by Forestry officials here today,"⁶¹ the story going on to praise the boys for this example of devotion to duty. It was not explained why fire-fighting should not take precedence over ball-playing, especially on Wednesday afternoon.

A report from the Trout Creek camp in Western Montana, after detailing the amusements offered the boys in the way of baseball, boxing, chess, movies, ballet-dancing and bridge, continues:

"Still another group of the CCC's spend most of their time inspecting various points of interest, climbing mountains, Etc. This is the hiking club.

"Then the geological club members spend a large part of their time gold-hunting, much in the same manner as the prospectors. The glee club is planning a musical comedy production...Filling photo diaries and comparing prize shots are the hobbies of the photographic club.

"The sky is the chief object of interest for members of the astronomy club, which is growing more and more popular among the boys.

"However, despite the large number of activities already being enjoyed, Captain Milton A. Stone, executive officer, is still organizing clubs and groups of different sorts, so that all men may have one or more activities to occupy their spare time."⁶²

Small wonder that Senator Dickinson was moved to say "They are not working; they are just playing."⁶³ Or that a leader in the Corps admitted confidentially, "The general public is not impressed by the work that is being done."⁶⁴

Aside from these more formal recreations, the boys spent no little time in spontaneous pleasures, such as "hanging around" any towns within walking distance, and prowling the countryside. On payday (and especially a few days later, after their allotments had been returned to the boys by their "dependents") they were able to contribute substantially to the incomes of theaters, speakeasies, and certain other places of amusement.

The important place given to recreational activity has been explained as being necessary to work off the abundant energy of the boys, in the failure of the work program to do so. The good intentions of the commanding officers in trying to keep the exuberance of their charges within bounds met with indifferent success in many camps. Reports from various camps stated or implied that discipline was the greatest problem, made especially troublesome by the officers' lack of authority to enforce orders. At the start, the President had made it emphatic that military discipline would not be a corollary of military supervision. An executive order issued subsequently listed the punishments that were authorized: "admonition, suspension of privileges, substitution of specified duties within the camp instead of the regular work for a maximum period of one week; or deduction of not to exceed three days' cash allowance per month."⁶⁵ It had been explained to each applicant on

enrollment that "Continued violation of rules or instructions would be a cause for dismissal of a man from the emergency conservation work."⁶⁶

Such a list of punishments could obviously be of little use in curbing a group of two hundred men who were inclined to be unruly; and since many of the companies had a preponderance of lawless and rowdy members, little short of chaos could be expected. "Admonition" from a fatherly commanding officer had little effect on embryo gangsters with life-long practice in dodging policemen and truant officers. Serving on kitchen police for a week was easier than working in the woods, and brought them no feeling of shame or disgrace. Camp commanders were extremely reluctant to impose the authorized three-dollar fine, fearing the consequences if it became known to the sentimental public. Expulsion from the Corps and shipment back to New York was hardly a deterrent or punishment, but it was the solution to the problem of keeping order. This remedy had to be applied even at conditioning camps, as communists and criminals appeared among the selected young men. Wherever men from the metropolitan sections of the East were located, a breakdown of discipline resulted eventually in some of them being sent home.*

Officers from Western Army posts were much more ready

*See p.74

to cleanse their companies of trouble-makers, and within a few weeks after permanent organization was effected, had a group of men who remained fairly peaceful through the summer. So successful was one captain from Fort Missoula in weeding out rowdies, that he was temporarily assigned to the most troublesome of the New York camps to establish some kind of order. He met with such success that work could be resumed on the conservation project, but only after wholesale dismissals.⁶⁷

Officers in command of eastern companies always explained that they hesitated to oust trouble-makers, fearing that to do so would reflect on their ability to handle men, and unfavorably affect their records. So many of them endured insult and insolence all summer, allowed buildings and tents to be burned, food and property to be wasted and destroyed, and saw the working season pass with little accomplished in the way of conservation. "Peace at any price" became the strange slogan of the army.

Whether unwilling to exert any effort to keep order, or virtually tied by the establishment of such futile punishments, the officers were faced with a condition bordering on anarchy. An example was the Packers' Meadow camp on the Lolo forest, manned by Company 1251 from New York City. The mess sergeant of this company said, half joking but all in earnest, "There ain't any more Communists

left on Times Square; they're all up in Packers' meadow." In this camp no week passed without a strike, in the form of a refusal by the boys to leave camp after breakfast, or returning from the job before noon. When sandwich lunches were sent out for the noon meal, the boys regularly threw them into the creek, marched back to camp, and demanded hot food. To keep peace, they got it. The sergeant of this camp further reported that when he bought twenty-two large serving platters, seventeen were deliberately broken the first meal, and the rest within a week.

During the summer a rumor spread concerning conditions in this camp, and the district inspector paid it a visit. Word of his mission arrived at Packers' Meadow a day or two ahead of him, giving the commanding officer time to send out several spike camps, small detachments of men, to inaccessible spots near the Howell Ranger Station. With forty of the worst incorrigibles secreted in the woods, the inspector found a fairly orderly and peaceful camp. The sergeant had been expressly ordered not to reveal the true situation, so Company 1251 received a whitewashing.

Similar tactics were generally used when a rumor or report of anarchy and lawlessness got abroad concerning a particular camp. One notorious case was that of a boy who was killed in a camp near Yellowstone Park. The first account reported that he had died following a gang fight

two hours after his arrival at the camp. After an investigation, involving an autopsy at Fort Missoula, it was announced that blows on the head had resulted in a fractured skull and cerebral hemorrhages, aggravated by the fact that the boy was suffering from influenza at the time.⁶⁸ Further circumstances and names of others concerned were not revealed, and the case seemingly was dropped; the public was given to understand that the boy was accidentally killed in a rough-house among his friends. All this was in July, 1933. In May, 1934, the case came up for a hearing in federal court at Cheyenne, where it was revealed that the sergeant in charge of the camp had killed the boy for persisting in washing his clothes at the intake of the water system.⁶⁹ If extreme, the case reflects two truths about the CCC: that to control the camps required methods bordering on man-slaughter, and that news about CCC affairs was censored before it reached the press and public. Only after ten months, and then indirectly, did it leak out that a sergeant had killed one of the members.

Riotous camps were not confined to Montana. Preston, New York, reported a wholesale jailing of CCC men from Harlem, in an outbreak that required the attention of several squads of regular soldiers.⁷⁰ At Pendleton, Oregon, fighting and rioting in a New York company ended in the arrest of sixteen by state police who had to be called on.⁷¹

In contrast to such conditions prevailing in some camps, others reported exemplary behavior from all members. One Army officer writes "A camp commander up in Minnesota told me...that the two worst offenses committed by his boys so far had been that one was a few hours late returning from Fourth of July leave...and another had taken a glass of milk from the ice-box."⁷² Such a report is almost incredible to anyone familiar with conditions in the Fort Missoula district, where the cooks passed up such small booty as a glass of milk, but sold whole quarters of beef to prospectors; where forgery and grand larceny went unpunished;* where police brought citizens to the Fort Missoula camp to identify suspects who had robbed their homes and stores, and annoyed their daughters. But it must be noted that the report cited above was made to and repeated by a CCC district commander, hardly an unprejudiced observer. Further, it was admittedly an outstanding and exceptional camp.

Failing to work off their boyish spirits in the four or five hours assigned to labor, or in the elaborate recreational set-up, the lads were inclined to be rough with the tools and property they had to use. A company stationed south of Superior, Montana, spent a pleasant half-day hurling their axes at snags floating past in the flooded creek; these same boys frequently broke their shovels when starting

*See pp. 44, 52

a job, in order to rest during the delay incident to getting new ones.⁷³ The incident of the serving-platters cited above is typical of the mortality rate among dishes. At Fort Missoula there is a huge salvage warehouse, filled during one season with specimens of every article used by the Corps, broken and damaged in every conceivable way; only a small portion represents fair wear and tear, the rest being chargeable to vandalism and carelessness. Abuse of equipment extended even to the trucks, which were driven at high speeds when new, operated by incompetent drivers, over-loaded, and frequently used for joy-riding.* An attempt to use only experienced drivers was thwarted by eastern commanders who protested that their boys were being discriminated against, but by mid-summer most of the eastern drivers had been involved in accidents serious enough to occasion their replacement.

A less avoidable but even more costly wastage occurred in the kitchens. Even thoroughly competent cooks, required to feed large and varying numbers of men, with inadequate facilities, could not have avoided wastage of food; but when the cooks were inexperienced and evil-intentioned, the garbage cans held more food than the boys did.

*One enterprising driver earned several dollars each Sunday by pulling stalled cars out of a mud hole near his camp, using his CCC truck.

This tale of destruction, in itself possibly not worth recording, is significant in its reflection of the irresponsible type predominant in the CCC, and of the inability of the leaders to maintain anything like the efficiency of a private enterprise. Those responsible say that such conditions are unavoidable, that wastage is certain to develop where things are being done hurriedly and on a big scale, especially where government money and property are concerned. This is doubtless true, in which there could be few better reasons advanced for abandoning the CCC and all undertakings of a similar nature. But those who know of this inefficiency are the Army men and forestry workers, not the men who determine whether the CCC shall be continued; that decision rests with men too far removed to understand clearly the conditions that prevail in the Corps.

A commentator on the CCC has written:

"The CCC (Poison Ivy) boys out on the Pacific coast were irritating...They slinked along country roads, tearing weeds out of road banks, so that when the winter rains and snows arrived, there would be no weeds to hold the banks together. That worried the serious-minded Westerners because the CCC boys in the far west were foreigners; that is, they came mostly from New York and Chicago and other places east. The far-Westerners could not see the sense of importing labor from a foreign country like Hoboken to do jobs in Portland or Seattle when there were plenty of unemployed in Portland and Seattle to do the work if there were any money to pay them. It did not amuse the far-Westerner to be asked to contribute to the Community Drive to keep his neighbors in milk and coal while the Poison Ivy boys were eating beans and apple pie and other army rations. In a word, the CCC

conception violated every sectional tradition of the American people, and therefore was nowhere popular."⁷⁴

This statement implies a sectionalism on the part of western people, only partly justified by the creation in their midst of jobs for outsiders. While there was some measure of this feeling from the start, westerners generally understood that the CCC was to be a national project, and that populous regions were entitled to predominance in selecting men for the work. When it was announced that a number of eastern boys were to be brought into the forested regions of the West, the feeling among the "natives" was that the visitors should be treated with traditional western hospitality. Their coming was anticipated with pleasure, and it was not until the CCC boys were found to be aliens in every sense of the word that any changed sentiment developed that would lead to a charge of sectionalism. It was not that the boys were foreign geographically, but foreign racially, linguistically, morally and ethically.

On arriving at Fort Missoula, the first delegations were not long in discovering that there was within walking distance a town that took no special precautions against thieves, where the merchants were soft enough to exhibit articles in open show-cases and on the street. For a week in early June the merchants of Missoula suffered frequent raids; the local police proved somewhat more futile than usual, and the CCC tents at Fort Missoula filled with

assorted merchandise once owned by Missoula shop-keepers. When the merchants began to take steps to safeguard their property, the boys turned their attention to residences and parked automobiles.

One accountant at the Fort Missoula Headquarters robbed the merchants by more subtle means, passing himself off as a colonel and cashing worthless checks. On being arrested, he plead guilty and received sentence, but was then freed into the custody of CCC officers. The next day he deserted, and a week later was arrested in Spokane for forging a check. A less serious case shows how CCC authorities encouraged lawlessness by defending the boys from local peace officers. Six Butte youths, arrested for drunkenness and fighting, were released to the custody of the officer commanding the Fort Missoula camp, on his promise to take responsibility for them. This responsibility he discharged by turning them loose and giving them two dollars to replace the "moon" the police had confiscated.

The visitors were a few days in discovering that the people of Montana are not the quick-shooting hombres of the movies. After that, it was no rare occasion to be shouldered off a sidewalk, with the announcement from one's assailants that they were from New York and consequently very hard.

Conditions were similar but worse in other localities, especially in small towns near the camps. Dances and rodeos

were broken up by CCC members in several places, and such towns as Superior, St. Regis and West Yellowstone were terrorised by threats of the toughs to "burn the town". Nor were they always empty threats; at West Yellowstone the camp commander personally undertook to defend his boys from a deputy sheriff who was trying to arrest the aspiring incendiaries. The outcome was a pitched battle between the New Yorkers and townspeople, ended by the arrival of more sheriffs from Bozeman.⁷⁵ The captain concerned was brought to Fort Missoula, where a court martial found him guilty of misconduct and drunkenness, sending him to prison with a dishonorable discharge. But only the account of the "battle of West Yellowstone" reached the public press; the rest of the story was suppressed.

At the Independence Day celebration at Livingston, the National Guard was called out (on the quiet) to protect property and preserve order, the three camps from Yellowstone Park having come to town.⁷⁶ They had come once before.

At Jackson, Montana, during a similar three-day celebration, the local jail proved too small to accommodate all the CCC boys selected for incarceration therein, so their terms were served in shifts: each was released on becoming relatively sober, to make room for one who was not.⁷⁷

When the quality of their guests thus became apparent, the townspeople were reluctant to visit places where contact

with them was unavoidable. Many citizens of Missoula canceled trips to National Parks when friends returned telling of camp-grounds and hotel lobbies "swarming with the scum of New York's east side". The hot-spring resorts near Missoula, both of which had CCC camps close by, were shunned by many who had previously spent week-ends there; the bathing beach on the Bitter Root River near town was nearly deserted by mid-summer, after the boys from Fort Missoula discovered it.

Some of the reluctance to drive on roads near CCC camps grew out of a well-founded fear of encountering CCC trucks. The camp trucks were frequently driven by reckless and unskillful boys, while the supply convoys made a practice of "ganging up" on civilian cars attempting to pass them on the road. As many as six trucks at a time were being repaired after crashes in the Fort Missoula district, an undue number considering the ratio of CCC trucks to civilian cars in the total traffic. A visitor to another locality infested with camps quotes the typical comment of a resident, "The whole country hereabouts is sore at the way the CCC boys bust into local dances, scare drivers off the road with rough-neck driving, and such."⁷⁸ Recognition of this latter evil was indicated in new regulations in regard to CCC drivers for the 1934 season,⁷⁹ but adequate regulations existed the first year, had they been enforced. Certain commanding officers failed to remove dangerous drivers even when

ordered to do so by the Colonel in charge of the district.

So it was no mere whim that accounted for the abrupt change in the attitude of the residents; it was not until actual harm had been suffered that anything like sectionalism developed. No one was heard to say that he disliked and avoided the CCC boys because they were from the East; everyone knew specific offenses and objectionable practices that had engendered the feeling. It was well understood by the Westerners that the least worthy and desirable boys had been recruited for the CCC, and that probably the worst of these had been sent to the Pacific Northwest. Many expressed disappointment that ordinary Eastern boys could not have been their guests, to enjoy and benefit from the care that was largely wasted upon the Corps members. Had the type of boys been sent that the West was waiting to welcome, there would have been fewer of the disagreeable episodes that marred the conduct of the camps in the West.

This attitude on the part of the hosts and the causes of it on the part of their guests were not limited to the Fort Missoula district or any other region. Shops in Laramie, Wyoming, suffered raids similar to those in Missoula.⁸⁰ Kalispell reported thefts by members of the Glacier Park companies.⁸¹ A letter from New York State said, "To allow men from cities to roam at large between nightfall and morning in these small towns is bound to lead to

trouble, as the inhabitants of Goshen and Thomaston can testify."⁸² Even feature-stories that set out to praise the CCC made guarded references to stealing in the countryside, and to clashes with local officers.⁸³

One rather complete statement of the situation around the famous Camp Roosevelt at Luray, Virginia, fits very closely the condition in the West. Quoting from a communication:

"Camp Roosevelt is only a few miles from Luray, At six p.m. the boys are turned loose, come to town, loaf, shoot pool, replenish the bootleggers and frequent the homes of women of questionable character. They have been guilty of every conceivable depredation, both in the country and in town, and according to one reputable citizen of the community, 'have raised hell in general'. Large trucks with 'U.S. CCC' painted in prominent letters are used to bring them in from the camp. There is no one in charge. They are permitted to roam the countryside until five a.m. if they desire. Just why they are not permitted to remain out of camp until reveille could not be ascertained...Needless to say, some of the peace-loving citizens of the community have been loud in their criticism of the conditions created by this deplorable situation."⁸⁴

Thus the camp visited by Mr. Roosevelt on more than one occasion, where he stated that he would like to stay a month, and where he found the boys to be "representative young American manhood, and the vanguard of the new spirit of the American future,"⁸⁵ and whence he came delighted that the boys were fat and cheerful.⁸⁶

The critic of the Luray camps aimed his attack at the Army, blaming it for the state of affairs:

"Now that the President has visited several of the CCC camps in order that the military may have his approval, and the daily press has played its part in the ever-present ballyhoo incident to such a visit, I thought possibly it would be of interest to the readers of the Christian Century to know something of the deplorable mess that the War Department has made in the handling of these boys and young men. As in times of war, the real facts are not known to the people. According to the press reports everything incident to the camps is just lovely.

.....
It is apparent that after the War Department accomplished its initial purpose, that is, of seeing how quickly men could be drafted and assembled in case of another so-called national emergency, it lay down on the job."⁸⁷

There were many who saw the CCC as strongly militaristic. Several church conferences adopted resolutions urging the withdrawal of the Army in favor of the Forest Service, protesting that the presence of the Army "fostered military attitudes".⁸⁸ At the outset probably a majority of the civilian population regarded the enterprise as at least an incidental preparation against Japan, or a subtle warning to that nation.* Foreign observers likewise have been unable to understand that an "army" could be recruited for any other than a military objective. Colonel Ernest

*A former member of the faculty of the University of Montana, on learning that the author was enrolling in the CCC, said ominously, "Two hundred fifty thousand hand-picked young men being massed on the Pacific Coast under Army control--don't you see what it means?"

Roehm, justifying the German Nazi storm-troops, said, "Today almost the entire youth of England, France, Italy, United States, Poland and Russia are not only clothed in uniforms which correspond to the respective army uniform in cut, but they are openly being trained by active and reserve army officers with weapons for war service."⁸⁹

Whatever the merits and flaws of Army control, and whatever its manner of handling the enterprise, no organization could have done better, if any other could have done it at all. The President had from the first seen the necessity of Army participation in at least the preliminary steps. Chief Forester Stuart had testified at the hearing that the work of enrolling and mobilizing was beyond the facilities of the Forest Service,⁹⁰ and recommended the Army as the logical agency. The original plan was to have the Army drop out after the men had been mobilized and transported to work camps, where the Forest Service would take complete charge. It soon became evident that the personnel and equipment of the Forest Service was scarcely adequate for actual supervision of working operations; there was no alternative but for the Army to take charge of the camps and of the men when not on the job, to undertake procurement and distribution of food and clothing, and to assume the duty of providing medical care and hospitalization. The Army, with great facilities and man-power,

was only partly utilizing both, while the Forest Service was taxed to capacity. That this arrangement would finally be necessary was doubtless understood from the start by the few in charge at Washington, but the gradual increase in Army participation helped to avoid suspicion and popular fear of a militaristic move.

Just before being ordered to take over the CCC, the Army had suffered a fifteen percent pay-cut, along with other federal employees; the cut was "justified" by the decreasing cost of living, which has slight bearing on the soldier, who gets most of his pay in other than cash. In addition to the cash deduction, allowances for clothing, re-enlistment bonuses, and promotion for merit were abolished, totaling a cut of nearly forty percent to many soldiers. The base pay of a private ranged around eighteen dollars, that of the boys in the Corps from thirty to forty-five, under more favorable terms of enlistment and service. This injustice was felt keenly by the soldiers, especially as the CCC boys goaded them about it. Communists among the boys tried to wreck the Army morale by working on this point.⁹¹ A corporal engaged in enrolling CCC's at Buffalo, New York, stated this grievance in a letter to his Congressman, pointing out that the Corps boys were able to contribute more to needy relatives than the soldier's entire cash allowance. He estimated that two-thirds of the CCC men would be rejected in an Army physical examination, and

stated that many successful CCC applicants had recently failed in an attempt to enlist in the Army. For this inferiority they received nearly twice the salary.⁹² Many soldiers were led to consider joining the CCC on the expiration of their enlistments, and several at Fort Missoula did so. The fact that the Army performed so satisfactorily is testimony of its loyalty and spirit of service.

Though the officers, like the men, had suffered salary reductions and "freezing" of promotions, some of them owed their retention in active duty to the need of commanding officers for CCC camps.⁹³ Many reserve officers were called on, some for their first assignments to active duty. Only such an emergency could provide these men with comparable experience. With them, the whole machine for enrolling, examining, clothing, feeding and caring for newly recruited companies, was given a practice run; the men who participated could mobilize and equip an army with greater speed and efficiency than was apparent in 1917.

For many younger officers, the CCC represented their first trial under conditions of warfare. A few were found wanting, a discovery that enabled the Army to rid itself of the incompetent before they had a chance to fail in a real war. One or two captains, in addition to several non-commissioned officers, faced courts martial at Fort Missoula for various offenses, as selling commissary supplies,

assault upon townspeople near their camps, and intoxication. Some commanding officers revealed complete inability to maintain orderly records of purchases and supplies. In cases due to inexperience, the companies' affairs were straightened up by late summer. Some officers ran their companies deep in debt buying luxuries to please the boys and keep them peaceful, knowing that responsibility for the bills would fall upon the reserve officers that were to replace them in the late autumn. Whatever the outcome, the Army benefited from this field-trial for its regular and reserve officers. Having so spent a summer, the Army could only be greatly improved in effectiveness in the event of war within several years. Whether there was any intention of this kind on the part of the Administration is a matter of conjecture, but it is certain that the plan worked out to the large gain of the Army.

Any boy who served in the CCC would make a better soldier for having done so. Having lived in a company camp, supervised by officers of the Army, an ex-CCC boy would be started on the way to becoming a disciplined soldier, though there was little ground for the frequently-heard assertion that the Corps boys, if not actually in the Army, had an anomalous status more military than civilian. The regulations forbade anything like military drill,⁹⁴ though at least one instance¹⁵ is recorded of CCC boys being subjected

to close-order drill.⁹⁵ In this case infantry drill was used as a conditioning exercise and as a time-killer while awaiting call to work camps.* At least, the boys were always exposed to pro-military influences. The statement has been made that "no CCC man has joined the Army",⁹⁶ but several members came in from work camps to Fort Missoula to apply for enlistment, having been given discharges from their CCC companies for that purpose. It was understood that they were accepted.

Few advocates of the CCC have ventured to commit themselves on the matter, but Major-General Hagood wrote, of the Corps member, "If need be he can be taught to use a weapon-- in a very short space of time. Here is the makings of three hundred thousand young soldiers."⁹⁷

Another instance in which CCC arrangements were turned to help the Army was in the case of materiel and equipage for the enterprise. An executive order called upon all departments of the government to furnish lists of surplus supplies that could be used for the CCC, to save delay in procuring articles for its use.⁹⁸ The Army was able to supply enormous quantities of clothing and camp equipment from its stores dating back to the World War. Much of the first clothing issued to the CCC was from the 1918 contracts.

*Possibly better discipline could be maintained after the boys had been marched into exhaustion.

The executive order further directed that the departments supplying the CCC with any goods were to be reimbursed by CCC funds to replace their stores. The result was that the Conservation Corps made use of material that would have soon been unfit for use, while the Army was enabled to replace its old stock with new and serviceable articles. Had this arrangement been more generally known there would doubtless have been more outcry from those who feared that the CCC was being operated to quietly strengthen the military.

Such "preparation for war" should please the advocate of preparedness, while giving least possible offense to the pacifist. It is a by-product of the CCC, gained at no extra expense. It prepares this number of young men to serve more efficiently, without creating any desire on their part for military achievement. It does nothing to hasten or provoke war, but a great deal to insure fast and effective action should one occur.

Like the Army, the Forest Service had suffered severe reductions in salary, personnel and program just before assuming the CCC burden. But to the Forest Service the CCC represented a restoration of more than had been lost in its regular appropriation. The demand for trained foresters was unprecedented, absorbing the supply of forestry school graduates as well as many experienced Forest Service employees. Less happy was the result to seasonal forest workers, the truck drivers, packers, and trail-builders. No provision

having been made for them in the regular appropriation, they could not be hired in their accustomed capacities. About one-half of the 2700 part-time workers in District 1 went without employment; the rest filled the quota of experienced woodsmen for the district.⁹⁹ They did the same work they had done in previous summers, or in the case of foremen had greater responsibility than ever, but instead of receiving the three to four dollar wage that had prevailed, they got one dollar. Chief Forester Stuart had assured the Congressional committee that only inexperienced men would get the one dollar wage, that such developments would be guarded against, that even should it occur, no trouble would result.¹⁰⁰ Time has proved that this promise, like so many others made in suppressing resistance to the New Deal, was not made to be kept. As it happened, men who had spent every summer with the Forest Service for twenty years worked alongside youngsters from New York City who received the same pay or more. Despite their indignation and resentment, expressed in a letter to the Chief Forester,¹⁰¹ nothing was done to correct the injustice. It remained another case where the intention of Congress and the expectation of the people was perverted into something unexpected and undesired.

The Forest Service budget for 1935, for administration and protection, is out nearly one-half million dollars, with no funds for aerial patrol, planting, sanitation, fire-prevention or improvement, with the explanation that funds

are provided in the Emergency Conservation Work. The total Forest Service reduction for 1935 is over three million dollars, the drop the year before having been six million.¹⁰² Thus the same work is being done by many of the same men, at relief wages instead of regular pay. The administration preached wage-increases and practiced wage-cutting.

The final results of an enterprise that looks as far into the future as does the CCC may not be accurately measured after a year nor after ten years. The ends sought are long-time goals, excepting the immediate aim of relieving want. But although it cannot be stated now exactly how valuable and far reaching the final outcomes will be, in the way of resources developed and young men benefited, it is possible to evaluate the results thus far evident, and to predict with fair accuracy the eventual return on the investment.

From the beginning of the activity, writers of magazine articles and editorials have attempted to portray its progress and incidentally report its degree of success. For several reasons these commentators have been more than usually uncritical. For a year after the new administration took office it was unfashionable to disapprove of any of its projects or policies, lest one be thought unpatriotic or Republican. Then, there was a sentimental angle to the idea of these city boys living in tent-camps in the woods; many

writers play up that phase to the exclusion of significant things. Many articles purporting to describe CCC activities are based on short visits to selected camps, and on superficial inspections of the headquarters and work-sites. These visits were made after due notice, giving commanding officers time to cover up anything that was not for the public. The reporters saw no actual murders done, no wholesale breaking of dishes, and no organized mutiny of the workers, so they wrote of a peaceful "army that lives by work", and described conditions too ideally perfect to fit any camp that was not on its best behavior for a special occasion. These published praises of the CCC are of little value in judging its real achievements.

For the same and other reasons, the comments in the daily press have misrepresented conditions in regard to the CCC. Whatever their personal convictions, editors feel obliged to applaud any institution as beneficial to their advertisers as is the CCC. Especially in the regions where the camps have been numerous are the journalists loud in their insistence that the plan is successful, that the Corps should be continued and expanded. Headlines have been frequent saying "CCC is Proving Big Thing for Minnesota", the story explaining that each camp spent sixty-four dollars a day for food,¹⁰³ or "CCC Brings Money to State; \$1,000,000 Spent Here in Six Months for Camp Maintenance"¹⁰⁴ Typical editorials are

headed "CCC should Continue"¹⁰⁵ and "Faith in the CCC".

Whether the nation as a whole stands to gain is of small interest, if local merchants benefit to the extent of a few dollars.* Whatever the editors have found to praise in the CCC, in benefit to trees or boys, is inspired by the "aid to local business" motive.

An example of this Chamber of Commerce type of mind is the case of a local meat merchant. He described the CCC boys as the worst rowdies he had ever seen, adding that his daughter was afraid to leave the house in the evening because so many girls had been annoyed by them along the street leading to the Fort; a moment later he expressed the wish that the CCC would be continued, because the camps were good customers. With such an attitude among their advertisers, the papers naturally suppressed the facts about the CCC, and emphasized the desirable results that had been thought up.

It is noticeable that the press felt less of such pressure in cities where CCC trade had not been enjoyed. Helena had no camps in its immediate trading area and consequently received a negligible patronage; papers of that city have been more critical, less sentimental, more ready to print

*A letter from an officer in Idaho shows the reluctance of business men to lose the camps: "We have 31 camps in this district...The pressure of local politics has been such that we had to retain three, to which five others will be added. Yet all our information indicates winter temperatures of 30 to 40 degrees below zero. How to keep the men in eight camps supplied and comfortable is our problem. Of course no work can be done by them."¹⁰⁶

unfavorable stories about the CCC, stories that did not appear in Missoula papers. It was a Helena editor that remarked, "If Governor Cooney gets a few trainloads of eastern pigs shipped out to Montana to work in the grain fields, we hope they are better behaved than the eastern boys who came out here to work in the woods."¹⁰⁷ It was a Helena paper that reported the New York boys on their arrival home announcing that they were "sick of Montana", remarking editorially, "So far as the young men from the metropolitan area of New York was concerned, Montana was sick of them."¹⁰⁸ This editor was far enough removed to have an objective viewpoint. Nothing like that appeared in the press of western Montana, where adverse criticism of the CCC was blasphemy.

The local papers went out of their way to allay hostile criticism of the CCC, in editorials deploring the "rumors" circulated against the Corps, charging them to "instinctive dislike of strangers". Under the title, "The Purest of Propaganda", the Missoula Sentinel scolded its readers for believing the stories about the Corps' depredations, because "So far all these have been proved to be without basis in fact."¹⁰⁹ The mere fact that these stories were circulating indicates an unfriendly attitude on the part of the people, an attitude not chargeable alone to sectional prejudice.*

*See above, p.43

Furthermore, most of the stories are known to have "a basis in fact", and many more like them would have circulated had the inside observers cared or dared to tell half of what they might.

To thoroughly discuss the means and measures that were employed to present the desired picture to the public would require more space than can here be given it, but several outstanding facts should not be ignored. We have seen that more or less innocently the periodicals portrayed a superficial and idealistic picture, while the daily press spoke with the voice of its advertisers and of the Chamber of Commerce. Less innocent and less excusable have been the efforts of those in charge of the Corps to "sell" the idea to the public; an analysis of their activities is enlightening.

From the outset the large Sunday papers were supplied with feature articles, most of them by Chief Forester Stuart and ECW Director Fechner, outlining and explaining the plan and its aims. As the season advanced, these stories reported the progress of the work, implying that the Corps was accomplishing all that had been out for it at the start. By mid-winter, Mr. Fechner wrote of the Corps as having achieved all that was hoped for and expected of it.¹¹⁰ Naturally those responsible for any CCC activity, whether in Forest Service, Army or ECW, gladly took advantage of the friendly attitude of the press, and joined in furnishing copy to keep the

favorable propaganda flowing. After writing several such articles, it is likely that the authors themselves became convinced, and proceeded to write sincerely that the CCC was an unqualified success. Also it is apparent that some individual CCC leaders have become intoxicated with the paternalism they have dealt out, till they regard it as their personal charity, and the recipients as their foster sons. Nothing else so well explains the interest with which many camp commanders attended to the individual welfare of their boys to the neglect of other duties, and their instant defense of them when anyone mentioned their shortcomings. However commendable such an attitude may be, it does not produce truthful and open-minded judgments. Yet the reports of these men have been accepted and published as dependable and true.

Even when CCC authorities understood the real situation they took care to hide it from the general public. Mr. Nelson F. Brown, touring the West as personal representative of Mr. Fechner, had only the most optimistic and favorable remarks for the interviewers,¹¹¹ but in a professional magazine he reported many unsatisfactory developments.¹¹² It was permissible to admit and discuss these privately, but the public must not hear of them.

That there was a consistent effort to suppress the truth about the CCC cannot be doubted when it is considered that these facts were well known to residents of localities near

the camps and by all who had occasion to visit them. The men who wrote these articles and reports had even better opportunities to observe and learn the real conditions; they knew that the camps were generally lawless, that they were accomplishing little, that equipment and supplies were being wastefully destroyed, and that the communities near the camps despised them; yet no mention of these or other unfavorable facts have appeared in their published reports. Instead, deliberate misrepresentation has been common, in treating the boys' worst offenses as mere youthful pranks, and in general branding as unfair rumors the absolute truths that were current concerning CCC affairs.

In at least one case outright censorship was resorted to. A newspaper published in Spokane in the interest of CCC boys in the Fort George Wright district, was ostensibly written by reporters among the enrolled members. Actually, no copy was accepted without the camp commander's approving initials.¹¹³ Left to themselves, the boys were too likely to report only ball games, visits to town, boxing tournaments, musicales and movie-shows, which made up the bulk of their activities and interests, so the commanding officers censored their stories to delete what the public should not be told, and substitute what the public should be led to believe.

Director Fechner has stated that the CCC in its first year "1.increased employment, 2.lightened state relief loads, 3.aided industrial recovery by furnishing a market for large quantities of supplies, 4.reduced huge dollar losses caused annually by depredations of fire, forest pests and diseases, and 5.improved the physical and mental outlook of the boys."¹¹⁴ Since these are the original aims of the enterprise, Mr. Fechner's assurance of their attainment indicates his satisfaction that the work has been successful. However, a critical examination of each of these points reveals something short of perfect success.

The facts of unemployment relief may be stated concisely. A full-strength number of 314,000 were given work in the CCC, including the Indian and veteran quotas.¹¹⁵ About 488,000 individuals were enrolled altogether.¹¹⁶ At a wage of slightly over one dollar a day, they received about \$125,000,000 as compared to \$171,000,000 spent for equipment and supplies. However important and valuable to the individuals, such a figure represents a small achievement in relieving an unemployed total of 15,000,000.

Closely connected with this is the "provision of a market for goods" claim. Part of the hundred million dollars spent for supplies was a real boon to local merchants. Likewise dairymen and vegetable gardeners near the camps found them a ready and profitable market. However, in western Montana

such profits were partly offset by the unpaid accounts left by many Eastern companies on their departure for the South. These local tradesmen were not even advised of the companies' new locations, and had to rely on the District Quartermaster's office at Fort Missoula to locate them and forward statements. These bills, covering charges for eggs, butter, milk, candy, vegetables and ice-cream, varied from a few dollars to several hundred.

The purchase of quantities of such items as trucks, passenger cars, ambulances, shovels, grindstones, dynamite and blasting fuse, to mention a few, necessarily meant employment for many men, as did the purchase of food, clothing, and transportation. The effect of these expenditures could only be to benefit all lines of business directly or indirectly concerned. Whether these results were worth the price is another question.

In the same way, merely reciting the amount of work accomplished proves nothing of the Corps' value in furthering conservation. It is reported that the Corps built 29,000 miles of truck roads, 29,000 miles of telephone line, 630 lookout stations, and 420,000 erosion dams; has planted 98,000 acres of trees; has freed 1,675,000 acres from insect pests, cleared rodents off 4,400,000 acres and poisonous plants off 68,000 acres, and has uprooted 49,000,000 gooseberry bushes.¹¹⁷ Granting that this represents an enormous amount of work, it

must be judged in terms of an enormous outlay. Success for the project may be claimed only when it is shown to be more efficient than any other means. Strong advocates of the CCC acknowledge that the reverse is true. One says, "ECW is costing a lot of money. Viewed as a straight work project, it would never be justifiable. Likewise, as a straight relief project it would be far too expensive. But it is neither."¹¹⁸ The implications of this statement will be discussed later, but it is significant here that the conservation work, as such, has cost more than it is worth. Another writes "To answer the question whether material results are in proportion to the investment is more difficult...In many cases, from the dollars and cents viewpoint, the answer is 'no'."¹¹⁹ Forester E.W.Kelly, answering critics who say that experienced woodworkers could have accomplished more per dollar, "refers to the fact that the CCC program was designed to help the boys as well as to save the forests."¹²⁰ He does not challenge the truth of the complaint.

Whatever the Corps accomplished in the way of conservation must be partially discounted by the activities that were detrimental to that goal. Though given little publicity, this aspect was in some cases important. Late in the summer it was noticed at the Fort Missoula commissary that a company stationed at Rexford, Montana, was far below normal in consumption of contract beef. An informal investigation brought

the explanation that the camp was using venison that "walked in the kitchen door and died". When the Montana companies occupied the Nine Mile site during the hunting season, a responsible member of this company boasted that the camp would buy no beef "as long as there's a deer left in the Nine Mile Valley." The very project on which the men spent the winter was the fencing of a favorite deer-wintering ground, for additional Forest Service pasture. Another camp reported that the boys liked the more isolated "spike camps" since fishing was better there; no reference was made to the cost of non-resident fishing licenses.¹²¹ A lad from the Packers' Meadow camp spent eight dollars for a rifle which he carried on daily trips between Lolo Hot Springs and Missoula; it was his boast that nothing could move along the roadside and escape a .30 caliber slug. While in the woods some members of this company carried spiked clubs to exterminate rabbits, squirrels, porcupines, and nesting birds. Apart from these actual attacks upon wild life, the mere presence of large camps, with the attendant disturbance, drove deer and other game away from their favorite haunts, and exposed them to the carnivores further back in the wilderness.

That the effect of the CCC would not be entirely favorable to conservation was suggested prior to and shortly after its inception, but such warnings were ignored. A letter was read at the close of the Congressional committee hearing,

which expressed a fear that the work of the CCC would "cause wholesale ruination of the natural beauty of the forests"¹²² but the committee were already putting on their hats to leave, and the matter received no consideration.

Before the work was well begun, a letter from the Emergency Conservation Committee deplored the killing of game and wild life "that is resulting from the colonisation in the forest regions of thousands of men who have no background of knowledge of forest life. Already we have complaints from certain states. We feel sure that the enforcement of regulations against possession of firearms, and efforts to induce the men not to kill but to protect...all wild life creatures in the forest would do a vast amount of good."¹²³ This letter closed with a forecast of more trouble when hunting seasons opened and state game laws proved unenforceable. If anything was done to comply with these suggestions it was not evident in the Montana district.

Chief Forester Stuart, though praising the CCC's work in fire suppression, wrote, "On the other hand, the conservation camps have taken much time of the administrative officers that is normally given to training and supervising the protection forces."¹²⁴ The works of the CCC were not all on the side of conservation, but these aspects have not been a conspicuous part of the feature stories and news reports of the Corps.

Returning to the ready admission that the CCC has not earned its keep in amount of conservation work done, the question of its net value is put entirely upon its effect in relieving distress and improving the boys. The value of the relief factor is especially interesting in view of the frequent assertions at the outset that the Corps was purely a relief measure. The idea was particularly urged by Secretary of Labor Perkins in the Congressional hearing when Mr. Green opposed the employment features of the bill.¹²⁶ In Congress Representative Byrns, sponsor of the bill, said, "This is not an employment measure...It is proposed solely and wholly as a relief measure."¹²⁶ It should be fair to weigh the relief factor quite heavily in evaluating the result of the Corps' first year.

The exact degree to which state and local relief burdens have been lightened cannot be measured statistically, but it is far smaller than any published estimate. In his report for the first year Mr. Fechner states that the exact figure is \$72,484.125¹²⁷ The only way that such a definite figure could be ascertained is to total the value of all checks mailed to the boys' families. This type of reasoning is too naive to deserve discussion, yet those who attempt to evaluate the relief factor must use this or a similar process. The truth is that the boy was an exception who did not receive back from his dependents a part of his allotment; in

many cases the entire amount was returned. A visitor to several camps reports the boys trying out demonstrator cars, and making down payments on not only used but new machines.¹²⁸ It should be called to the attention of the relief enthusiasts that the boys are not buying automobiles with the five dollars of cigarette money allowed them each month. Aside from the right and wrong of this situation, it is obvious that money so returned and spent should not be credited to the relief of needy dependents.

So a discussion of the outcomes of the CCC finally centers on the question of the effect of the Corps upon the boys concerned. The first published intention was to give them work and a chance to support themselves, but as the work advanced, the idea of rehabilitating and reforming the boys was increasingly discussed. It was soon seen that the long period of poverty preceding enlistment had left serious scars on the boys. Many were found to be under-fed and delicate, below normal physically and mentally. It became apparent that one of the greatest chances for conservation was that of the boys themselves, who could be rescued from ill-health, despondency, ignorance and the anti-social characteristics that had resulted. As the prospect of accomplishing creditable results in forest-improvement dwindled during the summer, increasing emphasis was placed on the "boy-saving" aspect, until even the leaders of the

forest work acknowledged that "of greater importance is the restoration of confidence, the reassurance of health, and the opportunity to work to 300,000 young men."¹²⁹ This authority hesitates to claim success for the CCC in material achievements, but declares, "From the social point of view the Corps has been a success. Proof is found in the reports from the camps showing the physical improvement of the men, their increased appreciation of organized endeavor and generally a sounder mental outlook. Betterment in physical condition alone is represented by an average gain in weight of eight pounds* for each boy who has passed through one of the camps."¹³⁰

Similarly the reports and statements of those in charge of the CCC have swung around to emphasizing the "boy-saving" claim. Director Fechner writes:

"I think that the improvement registered in the health and mental outlook of the boys represents one of the greatest constructive achievements of the CCC work. Many young men have been rehabilitated by their life in the camps...They will be returned to civil pursuits with a fine physique (sic) strong minds, healthy bodies and self-confidence that will mean much to our agricultural and industrial life for years."¹³¹

Mr. Fechner must know that fine physiques and strong minds do not result from six or twelve months in a CCC camp or any other place; no such short period, under even the most favorable circumstances, will offset poor heredity and some

*Few discussions of the CCC since have failed to stress this figure; as one fact among thousands of claims, it has become the keystone of the Corps' defense.

twenty years in a vicious environment. Yet he writes these publicity stories with all the exaggeration of an ad in a physical culture magazine. Yet so completely have these reports been accepted by the American people that practically all who have not had personal knowledge of the CCC believe that it has been successful. It is hard to explain why people should believe unquestioningly the statements of anyone so necessarily biased as the man in charge of the work.

Observation of the men at the time of enrollment, through the summer, and at their discharge, indicates that the changes in them were confined to increased weight and better garb. While they did gain in weight and possibly recovered some spirit, the net result probably was to increase the power for mischief on the part of those who are supposed to be reformed. The conduct of the boys just before they moved South showed no improvement over that of early summer, except that caused by the expulsion of extreme discipline cases from some camps. During the year there were 16,000 such disciplinary discharges; 29,000 deserted,¹³² generally after establishing records that made their absences agreeable. Disorder in camp and misbehavior outside continued up to the boys' arrival at their homes or winter camps. The night before the New York company vacated the Packers' Meadow camp, they attempted to burn the wooden buildings for a celebration, and were deterred only by the

presence of a new commanding officer, who organized the Montana experienced woodsmen into a fire-prevention patrol. Having been forebidden all summer to deal with the Eastern boys in a proper manner, the Montana delegation welcomed the chance to sit up all night and watch in the hope that trouble would develop. At the close of the season as at the start, guards were mounted nightly over the supply tents of the camps in Yellowstone National Park. Truck drivers bringing commissaries from Fort Missoula were obliged to park their trucks with the open backs together, like prairie schooners before an Indian attack, and to sleep in their trucks to prevent robbery. The boys were fed heavily three times daily and were not hungry, but the unprotected trucks offered a target for vandal instincts bred for generations and sharpened by life in New York slums, instincts that were hardly to be sublimated by a few months in the forests. Whoever told Mr. Fechner that these boys had been improved was not stating a fact.

However rowdy the boys had been on the trip west, their conduct on the trains returning them to their homes was worse. A Pullman porter on one of the trains reports:

"They were the worst gang of rowdies I ever hauled. They ganged on me when I tried to work, threw the electric light bulbs out of the window, and drank up all the beer* in every town between St. Paul and Hoboken."¹³³

*They paid for this beer with some more of Mr. Fechner's "relief money".

These were the fine young men selected by the agencies and further reformed, rehabilitated and refined by their service in the CCC. The frequency of such reports indicates that however badly the boys needed reforming, the CCC has done little to accomplish it. The improvements effected by the Corps exist mainly in the imagination of the men in charge of it.

Several commentators seriously stated that the half-year in the forests would teach the boys industry, resourcefulness and self-reliance. Instead, there is reason to believe that they learned indolence, arrogance and disobedience. A foreman of a large crew in western Montana gives it as his opinion that the bulk of the men are definitely unemployable in private industry, not only through their unfavorable early life, but because of their experience in the CCC, where merely remaining peaceable was asked of them, rather than that they work. After a life of idleness and unemployment, spending a year with an employer who paid unquestioningly in cash, food, clothing and quarters, whether one worked forty hours a week or not at all, probably has rendered them unfit for real productive labor, at least for some time. Yet the CCC proponents state that a major result has been the rehabilitation of the members.

At the outset, the boys, though scornful of policemen and sheriffs, had considerable respect for the authority of

the Federal Government and its representatives, but a summer in a CCC camp disillusioned them. They found they could destroy federal property, disobey and defy federal officers, and receive federal pay-checks while refusing to work. What their future attitude toward federal law will be, is largely what the CCC has made it.

Taking into account all the claims that are made for the Corps, its success can be conceded only when it is established that its results are better than could be expected from some other plan for attaining the same ends. Merely reciting the amount of work done and the amount of relief extended fails to establish such a condition, since these results were attained through sheer force of huge man-power and almost unlimited financial support. Three hundred thousand young men, backed by millions of dollars, are certain to perform a vast amount of work; the millions so distributed are certain to provide some relief and to aid business; eating army rations and doing little is certain to add pounds to a boy's weight. To prove that these things did happen proves nothing about the Corps' efficiency, and it is by its efficiency that any such enterprise must be judged. In the light of its advantages and resources, and considering what was expected of it, the Corps in order to be hailed as a success should produce not only results, but outstanding results, in both relief and conservation. Its failure to do so accounts for the

emphasis on the new outcome, "boy-saving".

This is an attractive claim, since it is difficult to disprove, not being subject to statistical measurement. Driven by facts from one untenable claim to another, the apologists of the Corps unite on this one, amid cheers from the social-welfare minded. The insincerity of all the CCC publicity may be revealed here by asking: If rehabilitation and reform of its members is to be the chief aim of the Corps, why are the enrolling agencies directed to select the "clean-out, purposeful and ambitious,...the best men available"?¹³⁴ Where are those really in need of rehabilitation and reform, and why are they not sought for the Corps? Why are not delinquents and incorrigibles given preference, allowing them to benefit from the great corrective power of the CCC?

The answer of course is that there are two CCC's, the one that Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Fechner and the uninformed public believe in, and the one that really exists. The former, imaginary CCC is built on contradictions and misrepresentations: only the best boys are accepted, yet reform and rehabilitation are the greatest products of the Corps. To account for this confusion, the Corps' sponsors must be charged with either ignorance or intent to deceive.

In evaluating the facts, to learn why a combined program of work and relief was organized as being most efficient, it becomes apparent that it has been largely the presence of these two conflicting aims that has prevented the CCC from

succeeding. Both aims, had they been sought separately, could have been more thoroughly achieved at less cost. Had the intention been to get conservation work done, the type of worker selected would have been far different, avoiding the mutinies in camp, destruction of property, clashes with local residents, and other disturbing developments. On the other hand, had the intention been to provide relief, all the money spent for camps, trucks, transportation and equipment could have been available to relieve need. There is no escaping the conclusion that more work could have been accomplished and more want relieved, on half the amount spent. Representative Collins voiced this opinion in Congress in June, 1933:

"We have adopted the most expensive way imaginable. I am perfectly confident that it will cost us no less than five dollars a day for each man enrolled in the camps. This is at the rate of one hundred fifty dollars a month...Under a direct relief plan five families could be cared for, with the members remaining at home where they belong, at no greater cost than relief to one family is costing under the conservation program, and the family is getting but thirty dollars of the one hundred fifty."¹³⁵

With this point evident and conceded* it is again necessary to examine the facts, to discover if there have been any benefits resulting from the CCC that may justify this greater cost. Because they are satisfied with the half-successes of the Corps, those responsible for it have not felt called upon to set forth these special benefits in their

*See statement of District Forester Kelly, p.66

written articles. Yet there are certain ideas implied in most of these articles, and frequently expressed outright in less formal discussion of the subject. One of these is the negative reason that work-relief is preferable to dole, which however true it may be, does not establish the need for a work-relief program as inefficient as the CCC. More significant is the argument that the plan provides for the removal of the boys from their unfavorable surroundings to less congested areas, where they are less susceptible to some dangerous foreign "ism", and less inclined to join in riots and demonstrations brought on by long poverty and unemployment. If this really is the reason for the CCC, it should be admitted, not hidden behind an assortment of false reasons. But the argument is more interesting than convincing. For example, it implies that the spread of Communism is to be opposed by placing the young workers in camps, where they work for the government and receive much of their pay in clothing, subsistence and medical care; the boys themselves recognize that this is Communism in practice, one of them writing; "It is essentially a communistic organization."¹³⁶ Further it states that the formation of gangs and rowdy mobs in metropolitan centers is to be checked by enrolling the men in an organization to be set up in the sections least protected against lawless depredation; in attempting to prevent gangs from organizing in one place, the Corps organizes

gangs somewhere else. Perhaps more significant, this theory departs completely from the principle that the Corps is to be "made up of young men of character"¹³⁷ and takes no account of the pretense that Boy Scouts were to be preferred.

Yet this point touches close to the real reason for the CCC: "the removal...of thousands of potential troublemakers from crowded industrial centers."¹³⁸ Any such intention is not expressly acknowledged by the Corps administration, but is implicit in all their writings on the subject of boy-improvement. It is quite generally recognized by the informed public, whose opinion of the CCC would be raised in some degree by a frank admission to that effect. But it is typical of the publicity on the CCC that the real points it has accomplished have been hushed up or even denied in favor of vague and dubious claims of social rehabilitation and poor-relief.

For example, when proponents of the Corps have sought most eagerly for points to support it, they have avoided raising the claim of military benefit, lest they stir up opposition from pacifist groups. Nevertheless, military benefit is the greatest and most easily demonstrable gain from the CCC enterprise. It is regrettable that the Corps may not receive due credit for this real constructive service, and less credit for the things it did not do.

There are few claims to success for the CCC that have not been damaged in attempts to set up others. The probability is that the value of each claim is somewhat less than the lowest estimate yet published. It is acknowledged that the conservation work has been negligible, and that the possible good to the boys individually is the best claim to success for the project. It is conceded that the plan has been an expensive way of achieving its ends. It is apparent that the CCC is not what the people believe, not what Congress anticipated, and possibly not even what the President had planned. For, turning to the standards announced at the outset, we find that it has failed when judged by its own criteria. It is obvious that too many of the boys were unworthy of the job, yet the Department of Labor had declared that selection of the best men available was "basic to the success of the whole undertaking."¹³⁹ It is established that the relations of the camps with their environs have been hardly harmonious, yet this same office warns, "Each of the forest camps...must be surrounded by a hospitable neighborhood if the whole plan is to be successful."¹⁴⁰

With the variety and conflicting nature of the claims made for the CCC, it is difficult to believe that even its loudest champions are both sincere and correct in their support of it. The apparent enthusiasm of the President for its continuance is based on his visits to selected camps prepared for his arrival, and on his acceptance of the reports

of those whom he has entrusted with the Corps' management. It is to the interest of these men to report success and satisfactory progress, that their record may be good and their work approved. But Mr. Roosevelt has been in politics long enough to be able to take these reports for what they are. It is not necessary that he accept them as accurate and conclusive, as when Mr. Fechner reports of the boys, "Their personal conduct has won the approval of the citizens in the locality of the camps...They are a splendid example of American manhood."¹⁴¹ Nor must he hold unquestioningly the good impression he received on his visits. As a correspondent cited above said, referring to the President's pronouncement that the camps were a success, "Yes, they were as he saw them. He did not see or know of the deplorable conditions I observed...I only wish he could have been in Luray after six p.m."¹⁴² He could have been.

Applying the tests set up at the start, and accepting the statements of all the authorities as to the success of the CCC, the conclusion must be that the enterprise has fallen short of its promises and possibilities. It affords the Administration a chance to keep its early promise to acknowledge mistakes and abandon disappointing projects. But the slight hostility thus far offered the CCC will probably do much to confirm the President's intention of continuing it. Oblivious to the flaws in this combined work

and relief program, or indifferent to them, he has said, "This kind of work must go on."¹⁴³

Doubtless this kind of work will go on. The future of the CCC after April 1, 1935, rests with the Congress meeting in January of that year. For many reasons this Congress is virtually certain to extend the life of the Corps, perhaps indefinitely. First, the body is presumed to be favorable to most Roosevelt policies. Second, most Congressmen believe the Corps to be favored by their constituents, and like them, many regard the Corps as pictured in its propaganda. Third, each additional "New Deal" organization extends a Congressman's chance for influencing political appointments, the merit system being a repudiated part of the "Old Deal". Fourth, business interests concerned will apply great pressure for its continuance, backed by the publications that depend on their advertising. And finally, even when they know the truth about the CCC, Congressmen will be reluctant to acknowledge the facts, since the Corps came into existence through the willing consent of Congress to surrender its powers, and Congress is still responsible for it. To admit that it has not developed as they expected would be to admit that they had been tricked.

If enough opposition is expressed to the Corps to call for a defense, it will be asserted either that such conditions as are here pictured do not exist, or that waste, inefficiency

social conflict and labor's hostility are unavoidable outcomes of any project of this kind.

In any event, the Administration seems committed to such enterprises, and the abandonment of the Civilian Conservation Corps hardly may be hoped for in the near future.

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Bibliographical Note

Since a portion of this thesis discusses the nature of the sources for the CCC, there is little more to be said of them here. However, this generalization may be made, that most of those who have written about the CCC are, for one of two reasons, disqualified as competent judges. One group, such as newspaper reporters and magazine staff writers, have been unable to make a study of the Corps, which fact has not deterred them from writing stories that are inevitably superficial, sentimental, or unbalanced. The other group are those who have been connected with the Corps in some way that precludes their writing critically or sincerely, such as administrative officials, and members of the Forest Service and Army who have directed some CCC activity. While this latter class have had perfect opportunities to observe and evaluate, their reports, except where strictly factual, are little more reliable than those of the journalists. Doubtless some sincerely believe what they have written; those who would be more critical are prevented by professional ethics or by

personal pride from recording the true picture of the Corps.

The result is a dearth of reliable material on the CCC, beyond the factual and statistical reports; competent judgments on the value of the Corps, the manner in which it was handled, the relations between camps and communities, the effect on the individuals concerned, and similar matters, have yet to be produced.

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